

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**IN OPPOSITION
TO L.D. 424**

“An Act To Allow the Use of Suppressors for Hunting Nuisance Wildlife

SPONSORED BY: Representative WOOD of Sabattus

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator DAVIS of Piscataquis and Representatives: CRAFTS of Lisbon, LONG of Sherman, LYFORD of Eddington, PICCHIOTTI of Fairfield, REED of Carmel, SHORT of Pittsfield, Senators: BURNS of WASHINGTON, President THIBODEAU of Waldo.

DATE OF HEARING: March 24, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Colonel Joel Wilkinson, of the Maine Warden Service representing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 424**.

Under current law it is illegal to use for hunting or possess for hunting any firearm fitted or contrived with a device for deadening the sound of an explosion. **L.D 424** would make it legal to use a firearm with a sound deadening device to kill wild animals or wild turkeys which are in the act of attacking domestic animals, destroying property, or causing substantial damage to crops or orchards.

Currently when a firearm is used to kill a wild animal or bird causing damage to crops or orchards, it has the benefit of not only killing the wild animal or bird causing the damage, but also providing negative reinforcement to the other wild animals or birds that may be present at the same time. An example of this would be several deer coming into an orchard causing damage to apple trees, one deer is killed, but the others run off due to the loud noise of the rifle, and hopefully they do not return. If a noise deadening device is used, the other remaining deer may not leave, allowing the owner to kill all of the deer present. It is the goal of the Department to minimize landowner damage but also to minimize wildlife loss as well.

When nuisance animals or wild turkeys are killed while in the act of causing substantial damage, the landowner must notify warden service within twelve hours, so a game warden can investigate the incident and issue a permit for the animal. When a firearm is used there is always a chance that someone heard it. If a sound deadening device is utilized no one will hear the gunshot, giving the shooter the false sense that if no one heard the shot, they probably don't need to report it.

Currently we have more and more violators shooting deer illegally at night, utilizing .22 caliber firearms, crossbows, bow and arrows, all in an effort to hide the sound of a firearm and subsequently conceal their illegal activities. Legalizing the use of noise deadening devices even for this limited exception, would only serve to encourage more illegal behavior.

I would be glad to answer any questions you may have either now or at the work session.